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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 001844

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: SPI CLOSED SESSION: IRAQ, AFGHANISTAN, BURDEN
SHARING, SCM AGENDA

REF: A. REF: A) SECSTATE 96122 (IRAQ COALITION DEMARCHE)
[1](#)B. B) SECSTATE 93225 (ANA DEMARCHE)

Classified By: POL M/C Joseph Y. Yun REASONS 1.4 (b/d).

[1](#)1. (CO) SUMMARY: DASD David Sedney met with MND Deputy Minister Jeon on September 10 for a closed meeting of the U.S.-ROK Security Policy Initiative (SPI). The discussed the following four issues:

-- DASD Sedney informed DM Jeon of the reftel A decision that would result in the drawdown in Iraq of all remaining ROK troops by the end of this year. Jeon called it good news.

-- Sedney urged the ROKG to send a survey team to Afghanistan to shape South Korea's stabilization and development package for 2009. He explained why it was so important for the ROK to send a clear signal that it would not stand by and allow the terrorists to win.

-- DM Jeon praised the joint effort to work out a solution to the Combined Defense Improvements Project (CDIP) funding shortfall problem. They agreed that when a satisfactory solution was reached, the issue could be dropped as an element in the SMA burden-sharing negotiations.

-- Jean and Sedney agreed (partly due to changing circumstances, e.g. the reported illness of DPRK leader Kim Jong-il) to set the agenda for the October 17 Security Consultative Meeting in Washington at a later date. END SUMMARY

[1](#)2. (CO) David Sedney, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for East Asia, met with Jeon Jei-guk, Republic of Korea Deputy Minister for Policy and Public Affairs, on September 10 for a closed meeting of the U.S.-ROK Security Policy Initiative (SPI) prior to the start of the SPI Plenary. DASD Sedney was also accompanied by EAP/K Director Kurt Tong and U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) J5 Major General Frank Panter. During the meeting they discussed four of the more sensitive Alliance issues: Iraq, Afghanistan, the Combined Defense Improvements Project (CDIP) funding issue, and the agenda for the Security Consultative Meeting (SCM) to be held in Washington on October 17. Commenting on those topics, DM Jeon stated that they are sensitive not because of any fundamental differences between the U.S. and ROK, but because a segment of the ROK population would criticize the results

if we were not careful as to how we addressed and resolved those concerns.

IRAQ: ZAYTUN UNIT COMING HOME

¶3. (CO) DASD Sedney began the meeting by informing DM Jeon that EAP Assistant Secretary of State Chris Hill had notified the ROK Ambassador to the U.S. that the Government of Iraq was planning to announce its decision on the composition of Coalition forces for 2009, and that the ROK's Zaytun Unit would not be asked to remain in Irbil beyond the end of this year. Sedney delivered ref A talking points and explained that the decision was the result of internal deliberations by, and with, the Government of Iraq, and was also due to the fact that there has been great progress throughout Iraq, including in the north where the ROK's mission in Northern Iraq had been successful. DASD Sedney praised the ROK's Zaytun Unit -- citing their courage and performance -- and expressed the USG's deep appreciation for their contribution.

He cited the President's September 9 speech at the National Defense University in which he announced the U.S. would reduce the level of our own forces in Iraq by 8,000 troops in keeping with our policy of "Return on Success."

¶4. (CO) Deputy Minister Jeon said it was very good news that the situation in Iraq was improving, and that some U.S. troops would be able to leave Iraq soon. He said that was all due to the passion and effort of the United States toward peace and stability. He added that once the ROK troops had returned to Korea he was sure the ROKG would be able to find other ways to contribute to the Alliance, including

strengthening our combined defense against the DPRK. I am glad that we could start off this SPI with good news, Jeon said.

AFGHANISTAN: ROK SURVEY TEAM

¶5. (CO) Turning to Afghanistan, Deputy Minister Jeon informed DASD Sedney that as a result of the USG ref B demarche on the need for assistance in growing the Afghan National Army (ANA), the ROKG was undertaking a comprehensive review of the assistance package it would provide in 2009. Sedney urged that the ROKG send a survey team to Afghanistan as soon as possible, comprising representatives of all relevant agencies, for the purpose of developing an expert understanding of the situation on the ground and a clearer sense of the kinds of ROK assistance that would be most helpful there. He explained that the ANA demarche was a global call for financial support and urged the ROK respond positively. At the same time, we encouraged the ROKG to carry out a survey focused on the provision of military forces, police training, and equipment.

¶6. (CO) Mr. Sedney explained it is so important for the ROK to "come back to Afghanistan." He stated that if the ROK gives in to the Taliban we all lose in the War on Terror. Sedney noted the Taliban message to the ROK (REF: Negroponte cable) trying to intimidate the ROK. Submitting to this pressure lets the Taliban win. In August, noting that President Sarkozy had flown to Afghanistan, had announced French troops would continue in Afghanistan, and had stated that France would never allow the terrorists to win. Sedney urged the ROKG to make a similar statement in word and deed as soon as it was ready to do so. Jeon replied only that he would "reflect" upon what DASD Sedney had said, while MOFAT North American Affairs DDG Lee Baek-soon added that the ROK would do "what was within its capacity."

CDIP: A SOLUTION IN THE WORKS

¶7. (CO) DM Jeon praised General Panter and his ROK counterpart, MND International Policy Bureau DDG Choi, for their efforts to work out a solution to the shortfall in ROK funding for past Combined Defense Improvements Project (CDIP) obligations. He said he understood that the situation was

less than ideal, but that a solution was taking shape that he hoped would soon resolve the situation. (Note: After earlier claiming it would be unable to fund any portion of the shortfall, MND has proposed to provide USD 98 million over the next three years to build a much needed second runway at Osan Airbase. The U.S. has requested that the ROK also fund USD 16 million for improvements in the HTACC at Osan). General Panter stated that if a satisfactory solution could be found, USFK would be willing to drop the issue from the Special Measures Agreement (burden-sharing) negotiation as the MOFAT chief negotiator had requested. DDG Choi stated that big strides had been taken and the he was confident an acceptable solution was forthcoming.

DE-POLITICIZING ALLIANCE ISSUES

¶18. (CO) In response to a request from Jeon that the CDIP issue be handled quietly, and that the U.S. keep other sensitive Alliance issues -- e.g. SMA and camp returns -- out of the media spotlight, DASD Sedney pointed to a quote in the Korean papers from the ROK Ministry of the Environment that had made headlines that very morning on the issue of camp returns. He said he was surprised and disappointed at the story, which contained false information, and pointed out that it put him in the difficult position of either allowing the falsehoods to remain unchallenged, or publicly disputing them -- both bad choices. MOFAT DDG Lee stated that MOFAT had discussed the matter with MOE after seeing the leak, but that MOE had claimed a member of the National Assembly was responsible for it, and that it had not been their intention to put out misleading information. DDG Lee said MOFAT had considered publicly correcting the record, but had elected not to do so in the end to avoid adding to the attention

being given to the story.

SCM AGENDA: TBD

¶19. (CO) The final item discussed in the SPI closed session was the agenda for the SECDEF-ROK DEFMIN SCM meeting to be held in Washington on October 17. However, due to a shortage of time and the fact that developing news over the health of North Korean leader Kim Jong-il and other matters could greatly impact the final agenda, DASD Sedney and DM Jeon both agreed to discuss the agenda later.

¶10. (UN) This report has been cleared by DASD Sedney.
VERSHBOW